

LEAFSPOT AND BLIGHT OF BASIL CAUSED BY PSEUDOMONAS CICHORII

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Basil, Ocimum basilicum L. (Labiatae), is a spice native to tropical Asia. It is a small plant, rather bushy and somewhat woody at the base. Because glands in the leaves contain an aromatic oil, fresh leaves are used for spices and in teas. Dried foliage is used for domestic and commercial food and beverage flavoring (2). A new leaf spot and blight disease, caused by Pseudomonas cichorii (Swingle) Stapp, was recently detected in Florida.

SYMPTOMS. The disease is characterized by circular to irregular, gray to black water-soaked lesions on the leaves (Fig. 1A) and dark-gray sunken areas on the stems (Fig. 1B). The lesions coalesce and become irregular, dry, and dark-brown with age. Tests have shown that high moisture levels greatly increased disease incidence and severity (1).

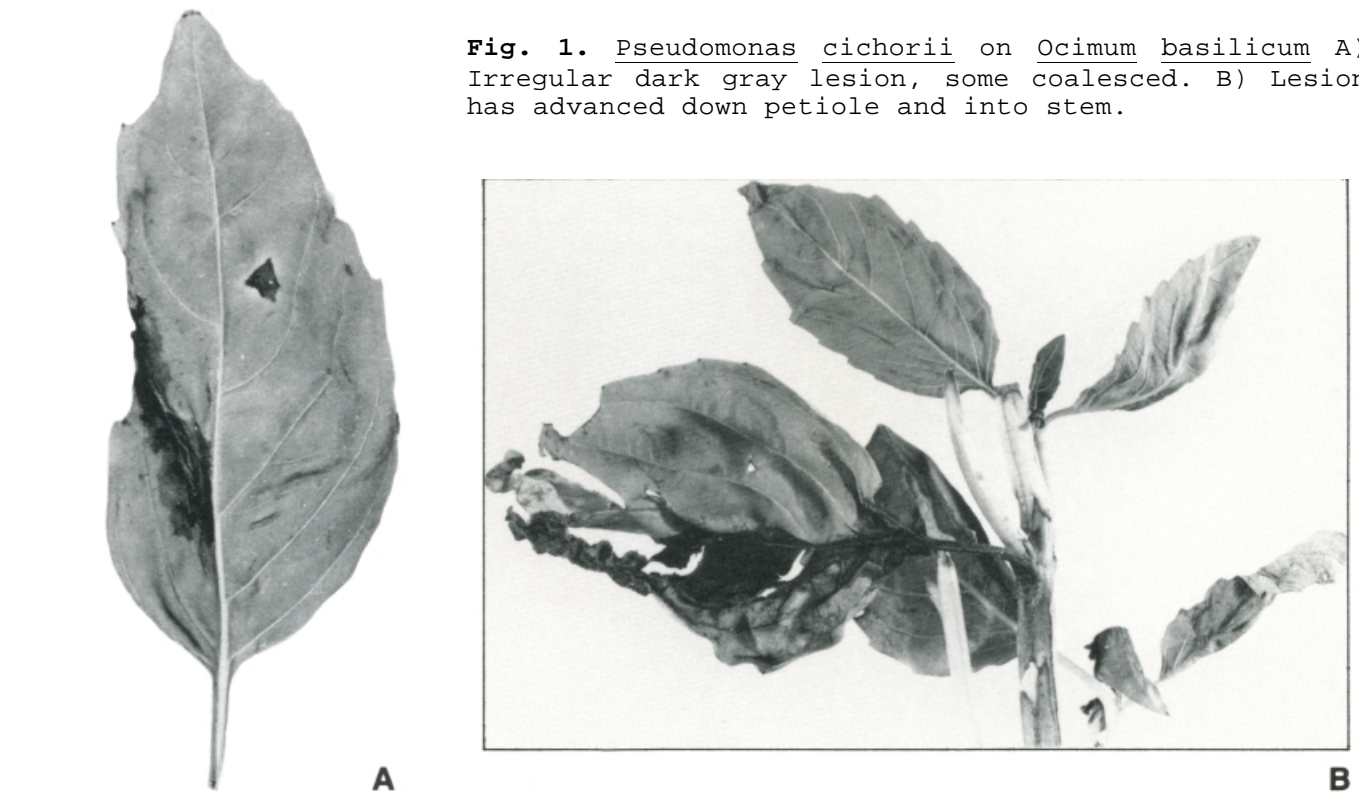


Fig. 1. Pseudomonas cichorii on Ocimum basilicum A) Irregular dark gray lesion, some coalesced. B) Lesion has advanced down petiole and into stem.

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CONTROL. No bactericides are registered for use on basil to our knowledge. Since tests have shown disease levels were higher at high moisture levels, keeping the foliage dry could greatly reduce disease levels.

SURVEY AND DETECTION. Look for dark gray lesions on leaves and stems, especially during periods of high moisture levels.

LITERATURE CITED

1. Burgess, S. M., O. B. Lawson, J. W. Miller, and A. R. Chase. 1987. Leafspot and blight of Basil, Ocimum basilicum, caused by Pseudomonas cichorii Proc. Fla. State Hort. Soc. 98: In Press.
2. Crockett, J. U., and O. James. 1977. The Time-Life encyclopedia of gardening: Herbs. Time-Life Books, Alexandria, VA. 160 pp.

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